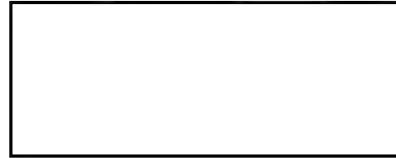


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JAPAN: Tanaka pushing for ratification of Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

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JAPAN: PRIME MINISTER TANAKA IS MAKING A SERIOUS BID TO SECURE RATIFICATION OF THE NUCLEAR NONPROLIFERATION TREATY [NPT]. IN TELEVISED INTERPELLATIONS ON DECEMBER 11, TANAKA SAID HE WOULD SEEK RATIFICATION DURING THE DIET SESSION THAT ENDS IN LATE APRIL. THE ANNOUNCEMENT WAS A PERSONAL INITIATIVE AND HE MAY STILL HAVE TO OVERCOME OPPOSITION TO THE NPT WITHIN HIS OWN PARTY AND CABINET BEFORE ACHIEVING HIS GOAL.

TANAKA'S MOVE MAY WELL HAVE BEEN PROMPTED BY CONCERN OVER THE CURRENT PETROLEUM CRISIS. HIS CHANCES OF SUCCESS WERE IMPROVED BY THE CONCLUSION LAST MONTH OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY [IAEA] IN WHICH TOKYO ACHIEVED EQUALITY WITH THE EUROPEAN SIGNATORIES IN VERIFICATION PROCEDURES. SOME TOKYO OFFICIALS FEAR THAT FAILURE TO RATIFY THE NPT COULD STRAIN RELATIONS WITH COUNTRIES--PARTICULARLY THE US--THAT SUPPLY NUCLEAR FUEL TO JAPAN.

TANAKA'S HANDLING OF THE NPT ISSUE ENTAILS SERIOUS POLITICAL RISKS. HE IS ALREADY WIDELY CRITICIZED FOR HIS HIGH-HANDEDNESS IN FAILING TO WEIGH THE MOOD OF THE PUBLIC AND THE RULING PARTY IN MAKING MAJOR DECISIONS. IF TANAKA DOES NOT HAVE THE SUPPORT OF THE NON-COMMUNIST LEFT, HE WILL NEED A UNIFIED RULING PARTY TO SECURE PASSAGE.

EVEN IF PRESS REACTION TO TANAKA'S ANNOUNCEMENT CONTINUES TO BE FAVORABLE AND THE MODERATE LEFT FALLS IN LINE, TANAKA MAY HAVE DIFFICULTY NEUTRALIZING THE TREATY'S REMAINING OPPONENTS IN THE LIBERAL-DEMOCRATIC PARTY. FOES OF RATIFICATION, LED BY INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER NAKASONE, NO LONGER ABLE TO HIDE BEHIND THE SHORTCOMINGS OF AN UNEQUAL SAFEGUARDS PROCEDURE TO OPPOSE THE TREATY, WOULD GAIN LITTLE PUBLIC SYMPATHY BY OPENLY FALLING BACK ON THEIR MORE BASIC CONVICTION THAT TOKYO NEEDS TO PRESERVE ITS NUCLEAR OPTIONS. THEY WILL, HOWEVER, PROBABLY FOCUS ON TANAKA'S UNILATERAL ACTION IN ORDER TO FAN RESENTMENT OF THE MOVE AND STALL RATIFICATION.

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